

**The book
with the
Board of
Trustees
Report**

Report of the Board of Trustees 2020-2022

Current Membership

Allan Blake – External Trustee (Chair)

Sarah Jones – President (Deputy Chair)

Ian Cheyne – Deputy President

Matt Porterfield – Vice President Administration

John Paisley – Student Trustee

Claire Wallace – Student Trustee

John James – Student Trustee

Selina Hanley – Student Trustee

Mark Price – External Trustee

Introduction

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management and administration of the Association, subject to relevant legislation and the Association's Articles and Bye-Laws. This includes responsibility for the governance, staffing, finance and strategy of the Association. The Trustees also have the ultimate responsibility within the Association to ensure the viability and sustainability of the organisation.

This Report provides an overview of key decisions and activities undertaken by the Trustees during this term within four headings: governance, staffing, finance and strategy. For those seeking more information, this report can be read alongside other published information and reports including:

- Non-confidential minutes from each meeting which are published on the Association's website www.oustudents.com under 'Board of Trustees' in the 'Your Association' section.
- Regular reports from the Board of Trustees to the Central Executive Committee which are published on our website under 'Student Leadership Team, Meetings, Agendas, Papers and Minutes' in the 'Your Association' section.
- The Association's full audited accounts, which are published on our website under 'Accounts' in the 'Your Association' section or via the Charity Commission's website.

The Trustees are very much aware that the period of this report includes a very difficult time for our 175,000 members and their families, the Association and OU staff and for all of those who give so generously of their time as volunteers in many capacities for the Association. The Association is grateful for all your contributions and hugely appreciative of your understanding to some different methods of working and operations that we have had to introduce to safeguard staff and students. We believe we have come through the experience with a greater determination to support our members effectively in the pursuit of their experiences and education at the Open University, and with plans for organisational change that will facilitate these changes.

Governance

On 1st August 2020 several new Trustees took up their roles on the Board. These included the three Officer Trustees (President, Deputy President, and VP Administration), and four newly elected Student Trustees who joined one continuing Student Trustee. The three External Trustees continued in their roles from the previous term. A by-election was held in November 2020 where a Student Trustee was elected to the Board to fill the remaining Student Trustee position. The following changes took place in 2021:

- In January Student Trustee Barbara Tarling resigned from the Board;
- In March External Trustee Annabel Lane resigned from the Board;

- In July Student Trustee Aiden Cameron resigned from the Board.

The current composition of the Board of Trustees following these changes is:

- Two External Trustees (with one vacancy);
- Three Officer Trustees; and
- Four Student Trustees (with two vacancies).

The Board intends to recruit a further External Trustee in early 2022, with the intention to enhance diversity whilst also seeking individuals with expertise in Human Resources and/or digital skills.

Following the recommendations from the Culture Review in early 2020, the Board of Trustees approved funding to review the Association's governance structures and processes. Almond Tree Consulting were commissioned to carry out the review. The Governance Review Report was delivered to the Association in April 2021 and featured recommendations for changes to the Association's governance structures and approaches towards governance, including behavioural governance.

The Board of Trustees approved the principles of the recommendations and asked the Chief Executive and President to form a working group to plan how the recommendations could be implemented. After receipt of the implementation plan, which included consultation of the student body on elements of the suggested changes, the Board approved moving forward with the plan. The October

2021 Board of Trustees approved the proposals for governance reforms, including the holding of Conference in January 2022. This allows the potential for any Conference approved governance reforms to come into effect in time for the Students Association elections and implementation of the reforms for the next two-year term. The Conference resolutions for the governance reforms were approved at the December 2021 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

OUSA (Services) Ltd (The OU Students Shop) ceased trading as a subsidiary of the Charity on 31 July 2020 and the operation was transferred into the Association. The subsidiary company was dormant throughout the accounting year 2020-21 until the strike off process from the register at Companies House was completed in September 2021.

Throughout 2021, the Board received regular updates on Covid recovery planning and continued to approve the recommendation of following the Open University's approach of no face-to-face events due to the ongoing Covid19 pandemic to maximise the safety of students, volunteers and staff. This approach was reviewed in December 2021, with Trustees agreeing to review the situation again in February 2022.

Staffing

This term has seen a period of significant growth within the OU Students Association staff team, from 34 staff at the time of the last Conference in June 2020 (31.37 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) when part-time contracts are considered)

to 43 staff at present (38.07 FTE). This reflects the increase in services provided to students and elected representatives and the financial strength and ambition of the organisation.

Former Deputy Chief Executive (Staff and Student Engagement), Wendy Burrell, announced her retirement in February 2021. The Deputy Chief Executive (Finance and Resources) also requested to move into the role of Head of Finance and Resources. Trustees considered and approved recommendations for restructuring the Association's senior management team introducing the roles of Director of Membership Services and Director of Engagement. These roles were appointed in April 2021, with Beth Metcalf and Dan Moloney respectively being successfully appointed.

The Association launched its new Individual Representation service for students and Amy Undrell was seconded to the position of Student Adviser from the Student Community team to develop, implement, and manage the service.

Allan Musinguzi stepped up into the role of Head of Volunteering and Representation. Additions to this team over the past 18 months include an Events and Projects Officer, two Volunteering and Representation Officers and a Volunteer and Representation Administrator.

The Digital Communications team added a new fixed-term Digital Communications Officer role to the team, increasing capacity from 4 to 5 to deal with increased demand over the period of the 2022 Conference and 50th anniversary celebrations.

The EDI and Student Welfare team (previously the Student Support team) added a Projects Officer (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) in response to increased demand and activity around the Association's EDI agenda. This increased the size of the team from 3 to 4.

Reiss Miller was recruited to the role of Conference and 50th Anniversary Project Manager from the Volunteering and Representation team.

And finally, a vacant Operations Assistant role has been filled on a temporary basis on the Operations team to support with OU Students Educational Trust (Ouset) applications and Conference planning.

At the time of writing, the role of Policy & Public Affairs Manager remains vacant. The intention is to fill this vacancy as soon as possible.

The Student Support team changed its name to the EDI and Student Welfare team, reflecting the increased priority placed on equality, diversity and inclusion within the Association's activities and strategy.

Finance

The finances of the Students Association and the OU Students Shop can be viewed in the Association's audited accounts. Ouset is a separate charity, with a separate set of audited accounts.

The Finance and Resources team, in conjunction with Vice President Administration, continue to work with the

appointed auditors, James Cowper Kreston, in carrying out their external audit and assisting on various financial matters.

The Association's expenditure over the last two years has been less than budgeted, mainly due to Covid19 and the lack of expenditure on face-to-face activities. All meetings and events were moved online, meaning that budgeted expenditure for transport, accommodation, and venue hire was not used. Representatives, Trustees, volunteers, and staff have worked effectively together over this period to minimise disruption to services and projects and risen to the challenge of developing new ways to represent, reach and engage with members.

The Board approved an increased staff budget of just over £1.6million for 2021/222. This is an increase of £214k on the current year due to the proposal of several additional temporary roles in the Association staff team to support Conference delivery, website delivery, 50th anniversary project management, and Governance Reform delivery among other aspects.

Strategy

The Board has received quarterly strategy performance reports from the Association's Head of Strategy and Insights over the course of the last term. The reports are compiled through collating CEC representative reports of activities, updates on strategy projects, and a series of key strategic performance indicators that are monitored by the Students Association staff team.

The current 2019-2023 Students Association strategy is now at the half-way point. Despite a period of delay caused largely by the adjustment to remote working at the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic, significant progress has been achieved with multiple strategy projects either completed, such as the new Student Representation Service, or underway. We are seeing increases in Association members' awareness of, and engagement with, our services, support, and events.

A formal review of the Association strategy will be carried out in the first half of 2022, which will report back to the Board of Trustees on overall progress and recommendations for changes and further activities to advance the strategic objectives.

For further insights and information on strategy visit www.oustudents.com/our-strategy.

Schedule of Meetings 2020-2022

24 July 2020

15 October 2020

3 November 2020

11 February 2021

6 May 2021

27 July 2021

12 October 2021

7 December 2021

3 February 2022

3 May 2022

26 July 2022

Dan Moloney

Director of Engagement

Open University Students Association

